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Pericles, Greece Needs You Back

By GORDON CROVITZ

ATHENS—The Berlin Wall, according to this country's most read newspaper, was built by the communists to defend against Western attack. Likewise, the Soviet Union's "struggle for detente is genuine," the country's prime minister assured a recent political gathering. "We cannot say that the U.S.S.R. is an imperialist power, unlike the U.S. It is a force against the spread of capitalism and imperialism."

Welcome to Greece, the home of the newspaper Ethnos and Prime Minister Andreas Papandreou. Mr. Papandreou's Pan-Hellenic Socialist Movement (PASOK) took over this NATO and Common Market member in 1981, vowing to move the country leftward. What's become of Greece since can be summed up by the advent of Ethnos, and especially by its recent successful libel action against journalist Paul Anastasi.

According to a book by Mr. Anastasi, the reason Ethnos reads like Pravda is simple: It's published "in cooperation" with the KGB, which he says financed the start-up in 1981. Mr. Anastasi's 317-page book, "Take the Nation in Your Hands" (Ethnos means "nation"), was published last year in Greek. In December, Mr. Anastasi was convicted of defamation for his allegation that the paper's publisher, George Bobolas, is an "agent of influence" for the KGB. Mr. Anastasi, a full-time correspondent for the London Daily Telegraph and a stringer for the New York Times, had his conviction confirmed in an appeal last month, although the sentence was reduced from two years in jail to a payment of \$1,200, and he is further appealing to the Greek supreme court.

Most Profitable Daily

Meanwhile, Mr. Anastasi's book is banned; Ethnos, with a circulation of 180,000, is now the most profitable daily in Greece. It is also the country's most pro-government newspaper. As a measure of the political environment in Greece, it has won its success by publishing assertions like these:

- The Korean Air Lines flight was a deliberate provocation by the CIA to spy on the Soviets, who were right to shoot it down.
- Poland's Solidarity works for the CIA and the Mafia-backed Vatican. (The pope's trip to Poland in June 1982 went unreported in Ethnos.)
- The U.S., not the Soviet Union, uses "yellow rain" chemical poisoning in Af-

ghanistan. According to an article written for Ethnos by a Soviet Literary Gazette "reporter," the U.S. is developing crocodile feces as a biological poison, to be delivered by specially bred mosquitos.

- East Germany "constitutes a miracle and an example for East and West."

Mr. Anastasi was found guilty of criminal libel for claiming that Ethnos is the first newspaper set up by the KGB's disinformation department in a Western country.

His source for this allegation is Yannis Yannikios, a pro-Moscow Greek Communist Party member and publisher. Mr. Yannikios refused to testify on Mr. Anastasi's behalf at the trial, although he did give evidence at the appeal hearing. Mr. Yannikios says he testified that at the urging of party officials he formed a partnership in 1977 with Mr. Bobolas, a Greek businessman. The men signed contracts in 1978 with the Soviet copyright office in Moscow to publish a Greek-language edition of The Great Soviet Encyclopedia, and, according to Mr. Yannikios, the proceeds on sale of more than 30,000 sets of the 34-volume set went to help get Ethnos started.

The Soviet contacts, according to Mr. Yannikios, were Boris Pankin and Vassili Sitnikov. The Soviets were director and deputy director of the Soviet copyright office. Western sources believe the copyright office is linked to the KGB, and its disinformation department in particular. Mr. Sitnikov was identified in John Barron's 1974 book, "KGB: The Secret Work of Soviet Agents," as deputy director of the KGB disinformation office. Mr. Pankin was director of the KGB disinformation department as well as Mr. Sitnikov's supervisor at the copyright office, according to sources cited by Mr. Anastasi. When Yuri Andropov reorganized personnel in 1982, Mr. Pankin was made ambassador to politically sensitive, neutral Sweden.

In an interview here, Mr. Yannikios denied being aware of any KGB ties until recently, despite several trips to the U.S.S.R. since the mid-1970s. Mr. Bobolas's lawyer says his client was also unaware of any KGB ties. Mr. Yannikios alleged that the Soviets had him prepare a detailed feasibility study for a new Greek newspaper, which he presented to them in Moscow in 1979. His plans included estimates of start-up and operating costs. It would be the country's first tabloid and would use color photos, clean layouts and top-rate sports and local reporting to lure readers. (Aside from its political orientation, Ethnos is the most professionally produced newspaper in Greece.)

Mr. Yannikios has some reason for antagonism toward Mr. Bobolas. Just before the paper started in 1981, Mr. Yannikios was squeezed out of the company. He then sued Mr. Bobolas for starting a newspaper without him, contrary, says Mr. Yannikios, to the original agreement with the Soviets. Mr. Yannikios's son testified in court that he and his father were visited in 1982 by Mr. Sitnikov, and that the Soviet agent urged them to drop the charges against Mr. Bobolas. "Bobolas now owns the newspaper," Mr. Sitnikov allegedly told them, "and you know how important that paper is to us." In an interview, the elder Yannikios acknowledged this meeting took place.

Irrespective of the truth or falsity of Mr. Yannikios's evidence in relation to Ethnos, it does seem that another of Mr. Bobolas's companies pledged to procure high-technology products for the Soviet Union. The company involved is Worldtech Hellas Ltd., 70% of which is owned by Mr. Bobolas and 20% by Control Data of Minneapolis, the computer company. Mr. Anastasi published a 1979 letter from Bobtrade Ltd., part of George Bobolas's group of companies, to A. Afonin, a representative of the State Committee for Foreign Economic Relations of the U.S.S.R. Council of Ministers. The letter proposed a joint development company using Worldtech for "world-wide technology transfer," and stressed that "Worldtech Hellas Ltd. will give a lot of help" to "technology transfer on an international base." A spokesman for Bobtrade calls company trade with the Soviets "disappointing" and says that no improper transfer of high technology is involved. Meanwhile, Control Data now plans to dissolve the partnership with Mr. Bobolas, according to a company spokesman in Minneapolis.

Mr. Papandreou and his PASOK government dismiss the Ethnos flap and haven't questioned whether Greek security might be endangered by high-tech transfer. Indeed, government spokesman Dimitris Maroudas dismissed the book as a "thriller appropriate for holiday reading." And the man prosecuting Mr. Anastasi, Stathis Alexandris, is the former justice minister in the Papandreou government.

Mr. Alexandris introduced a xenophobic tone to the December 1983 trial. He charged that six foreign correspondents who testified on behalf of Mr. Anastasi, including Marvine Howe of the New York Times, "belong to some similar circles"

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